

Standish house heritage speaks for itself

By DOROTHY KAVKA

You can almost picture the doughty benefactor of the Pilgrims, Capt. Myles Standish striding down from the hill later named for him to his bayside acres in Duxbury's Goose Point area as you stand before the door of the house erected by his son, Alexander, near the very spot on which Myles' own home once stood—a quarter mile away, nearer Plymouth. Part of the 100 acres deeded to Myles when he and his friend John Alden settled in Duxbury in 1631, the area looks much the same as it had when the Mayflower skirted the Massachusetts coast from the south, looking for a safe harbor.

PRESENT-DAY OWNERS of the Alexander Standish house, David and Dorothy Patten, have lived here for 27 years and only had to remove a single wall to extend the "keeping room," or living room area of the house, which includes the ancient brick fireplace where women of the Standish family prepared meals for over 100 years. The pumpkin pine panelling of the interior with the old latches intact, bookshelves along the sides, comfortably upholstered chairs and sofas for relaxing before the fire, and the numerous keepsakes brought from all over the world during Mr. Patten's service-connected assignments make it a cozy and endearing interior.

The original granite slab which forms the doorstep of the ancient house has the much-worn look of many comings and goings over the years, and the plantings of native cedars, lilacs, wisteria, bridal wreath and striped grass about the doorway with an outside "stoop" conspire to give the deceptively small weatherworn-shingled house an almost primitive look.

The chimney on the gambrel roof bears the numerals 1666 and timbers from some earlier house, possibly from the very house occupied by Myles until his death in 1656, were used in the construction as shown by the charred beams (of the attic area) which had been blackened by their proximity to a fireplace. Both the chimney and the hearth of this house are of imported English brick.

NOW THE FRONT entrance of the house from the driveway down off Standish St., the other side of the house—facing the bay and barren salt-marsh—was once the front. Sunny yellow curtains are used by Dorothy Patten at the windows of the house and, naturally, there is a fine schooner painting over the fireplace.



the beach house
She and her husband divide their time between the Standish house and the Goose Point beach cottage down the slope of their 25 acres nearer the bay. An extended, sectional one-level building with patio, it nestles here amid saltmarsh hay and bayberries, providing ample space for foundation-growing of flowers which like the sea air. Mr. Patton is busily working here to control shrubs, weeds and grasses — "a very particular M.I.T. type," according to his wife.

Stationed in Washington, D.C., during World War I for several years and he a captain in the Navy during World War II, the Pattens have seen plenty of the outside world and really enjoy their quiet retreat on Goose Point now where the stillness is only broken by the call of the bob white and by the visits of friends and relatives. They have nine grandchildren.

The paved patio before the beach house overlooks the bay; there's an ancient hooked rug dated 1825 before the doorway leading outside and authentic antique carriage lamps frame the comforting fireplace on cool evenings. Tasteful furnishings in the cottage emphasize decor which is native to New England. Even the pillows on the sofa are covered with prints of mallard ducks.

Listed in Samuel Chamberlain's photographic "Open House in New England" from the 1940's as a place to see in Massachusetts historicity, the Alexander Standish House is pictured on P. 30 of Dorothy Wentworth's new book, "The Settlement and Growth of Duxbury."

Historical Aspects

One of four sons of Myles Standish, the sturdy captain (whose grave lies beside that of his beloved daughter, Loara — who wove the first American sampler known in wide bands of geometrical and floral designs which may be seen in the Plymouth Antiquarian House) was from his beginnings a soldier in the service of the Queen. Born in 1584 in Chorley, Lancashire, England (the "seat" of the Protestant branch of the Standish family), he served against the Duke of Alba in the Netherlands, remaining there with the group of expatriated Separatists and joining the Pilgrims through a sense of adventure.

Statue of Myles Standish erected in 1876 on Captain's Hill in Duxbury was subject of controversy concerning the meaning of his outstretched hand.



The only one of the Mayflower passengers with practical experience in camping, he became their mainstay in the first explorations of Cape Cod and was one of the small party who made the first landing at Plymouth. His negotiations with the Indians, whose language he learned, and his personal victory over the Wessagusset braves who threatened the colony won him the esteem and lasting gratitude of the Pilgrims. In 1625 he was sent to England to negotiate with the Merchant Adventurers and the Council for New England who had financed the trip of the Mayflower.

His first wife, Rose, having died during the first harsh winter in the New World, he married her sister, Barbara, and moved to the wooded point of land opposite Plymouth in Duxbury about 1632. There was a clear spring, a couple of small ponds, extensive upland pasture and cultivatable land. The hill, which ever since has been called Captain's Hill and which draws thousands of visitors each year, was used as a beacon "lighthouse" for warnings of Indian attack. This is where the Standish monument now stands.

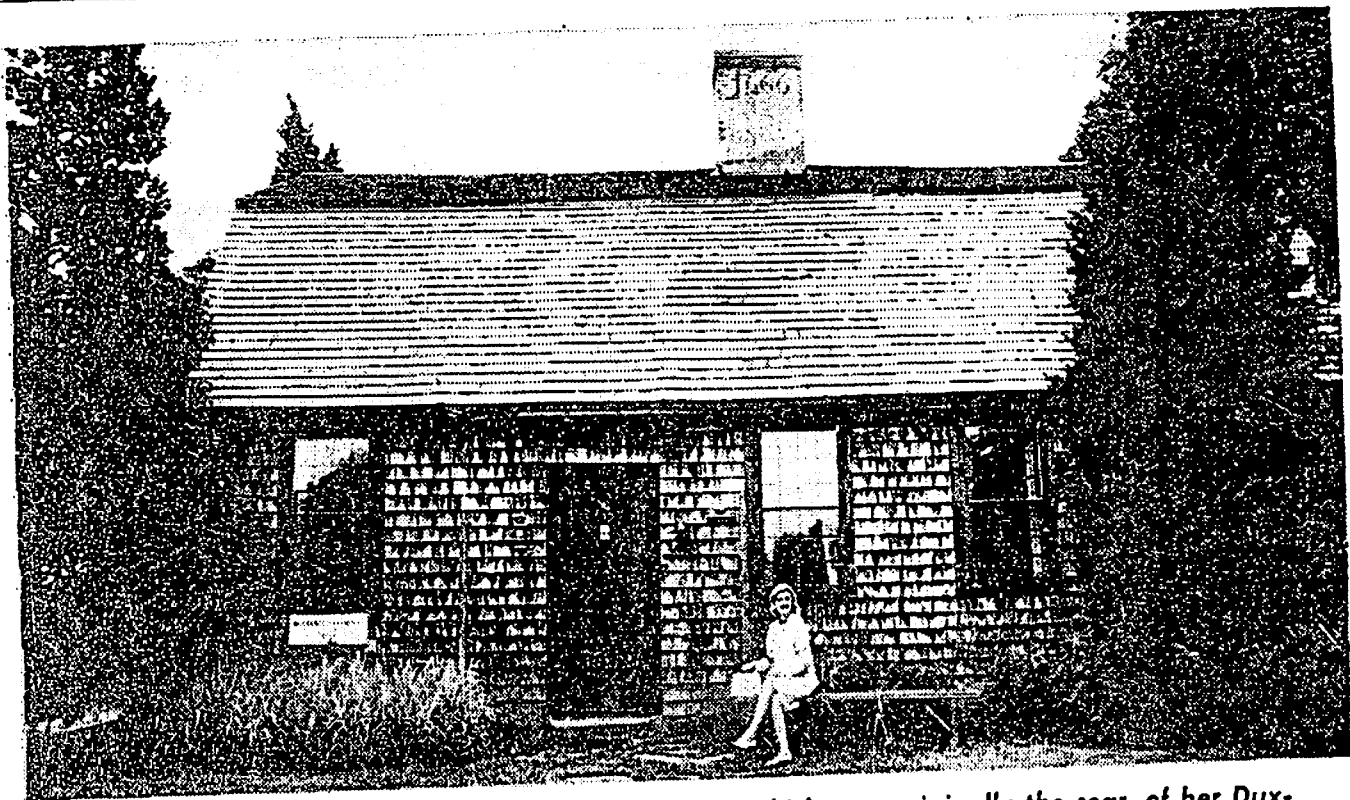
CONCERNED CITIZENS during the 1800's deemed it proper that a monument should be erected and ground was broken for the 110-foot-high structure of granite with cornerstone containing a memorial plate laid under the superintendence of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Co. of Massachusetts in the presence of the Standish Monument Association by the M. W. Grand Lodge of the Free Masons of the state. This occurred on the 252nd anniversary of the settlement of the colony.

Controversial Statue

There was some consternation on the part of local civilians when Myles, depicted in typical Pilgrim clothing, with one hand held out toward the east, was interpreted to be extending this hand toward his native England which might still have been unsuitable for a thorough-going New Englander to do at the time his statue was erected. Several times lightning has struck the monument, toppling Myles' head to the ground, but each time it has been reinstated and visitors to the reservation on Captain's Hill still climb the steep stairs to the top. The monument was not completed until 1896.

LITTLE IS KNOWN about his son, Alexander Standish, except that his first wife was Sarah, daughter of John and Priscilla Mullins Alden. They had seven children, and by his second wife, Desire, he had four more. He served as town clerk of Duxbury, and lived a quiet life as farmer and good citizen.

He and all the Standishes of the first few generations lie at rest in the local cemetery beside the Congregational Church. In 1889 it is claimed Rev. E. J. V. Huiggin discovered the grave of Myles. His skeleton gave evidence of great physical strength. But it didn't take discovery of a skeleton to prove this heroic figure, this rugged character during strenuous times (which produce great men) merited the honor bestowed in a monument to both his integrity and unwavering leadership. He still stands staunch and faithful overlooking the bay and the home to which he gave the name of his ancestral "seat" in England.



Mrs. David Patten seated by the front entrance, which was originally the rear, of her Duxbury home — the Alexander Standish house — with its original granite slab "stoop" and the date 1666 on the chimney.

The living room of Mrs. Patten's comfortable home at 341 Standish St., Goose Point, Duxbury, contains the original pumpkin pine panelling with its hand-wrought door latches and original fireplace built by Alexander Standish, son of Myles Standish.

